

ARIZONA Planning Bulletin



Ironwood Forest National Monument
Resource Management Plan and
Environmental Impact Statement (RMP and EIS)

Bureau of Land Management • Tucson Field Office

February 2004

Thanks for Your Participation

We would like to thank everyone who participated in the public meetings or submitted comments during the public scoping process for the RMP for the Ironwood Forest National Monument (IFNM) – it was a success! BLM received approximately 9,100 comments, and a total of 173 people attended the scoping meetings that BLM conducted in July 2002 in the communities of Arizona City, Casa Grande, Eloy, Green Valley, Marana, Mesa, Picture Rock, Sells, and Tucson. Each letter or comment form received was read and evaluated to identify the preliminary issues that will be addressed in the RMP and EIS. The issues identified have been summarized in a Scoping Report that can be viewed from the Arizona BLM website, at www.az.blm.gov or the Tucson Field Office, located at 12661 East Broadway, Tucson, Arizona.

Although the scoping process is complete, BLM will continue to collaborate with interested public, relevant agencies, and tribes for comment consideration throughout the RMP and EIS process.

Preliminary Issues Identified

The preliminary issues identified through the scoping process included a variety of resources and resource uses, such as air resources, biological resources, cultural resources, facilities and education, fire management, grazing management, hazardous materials, lands and realty, law enforcement and undocumented immigrants, mineral and energy resources, Native American issues, recreation, social and economic conditions, soils, special area designations, wilderness characteristics, transportation and access, visual resources, and water resources. The comments and issues identified through scoping will assist in determining the scope of the studies to be completed and addressed in the RMP and

EIS. A summary of the issues that received the most comments are listed below.

Biological Resources – Comments on biological resources included topics such as vegetation, noxious weeds, special status species, and wildlife. A majority of the comments received regarding vegetation and noxious weeds focused on the existing status and distribution of the vegetative communities and management thereof to ensure retention and enhancement of biodiversity. Comments regarding vegetation focused primarily on protection of the ironwood tree and small cacti species. Potential impacts on flora species from recreational, land development, grazing, and mining activities were the prominent concerns. Additionally, comments emphasized the importance of the ironwood tree as a nurse plant as well as for

forage and shelter for a wide range of fauna species. Comments received regarding noxious weeds stressed the importance of managing off-highway vehicle (OHV) use and grazing practices within the IFNM to avoid the introduction of noxious weeds. Remediation of existing noxious weed problems also was a concern because of the detrimental effects of invasive weeds on biodiversity.

Comments expressing concern for special status species stated

that BLM should assess existing road and dirt tracks associated with recreational activity and propose closure of those roads and activities that occur near habitat of special status species. Many of the comments requested that BLM give precedence to protection and restoration of habitat for threatened, endangered species, and species of concern (as listed by the Arizona Game and Fish Department) that have been assembled within the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan.



Comments on wildlife and wildlife habitat stated that BLM should make wildlife and wildlife habitat protection and enhancement the utmost priority within the RMP. Concern for the desert bighorn sheep and the impact from human activity was prominent. Most people that commented would like BLM to implement seasonal closures near bighorn sheep habitat and lambing areas. Additionally, comments stressed the importance of managing mining, grazing, recreational shooting, camping activities, and land development as they relate to wildlife habitat and wildlife corridors. Concern about recreational OHVs and the associated effects on wildlife and habitat were numerous; the comments note the noise pollution these vehicles generate and the myriad trails created by them. Other comments stated that BLM should implement ongoing enforcement actions for recreational activities within the monument to avoid habitat destruction.

Cultural Resources - Nearly all of the cultural resource comments referred to the importance of recognizing and protecting these resources. Some comments stressed the importance of giving cultural resource protection high priority. Several recommended that a cultural resources inventory be conducted in the IFNM. A large number of the comments indicated concerns with travelways providing unnecessary access to potentially sensitive cultural areas. Many suggested closing travelways that lead to or near sensitive cultural sites. Some comments concerning OHV use in the area specifically stated that OHVs threaten and destroy resources. Many of these comments support closing vehicle routes in sensitive areas. A few of those who commented were concerned about other activities within the IFNM endangering cultural resources such as grazing, camping, and the presence of undocumented immigrants. Some comments indicated that BLM should consult with tribes regarding the importance of cultural resources in the area.

Facilities and Education - A majority of the comments that were received on facilities oppose placement of any visitor facilities within the IFNM boundaries. Many commenters suggested putting visitor facilities in nearby communities that already are developed, which would provide an economic benefit to the respective communities. A few comments suggested that facilities (or development) should not be excluded definitively from within the IFNM.

Grazing Management - Most of the comments received concerning livestock grazing management in the IFNM stressed that BLM must conduct an inventory of current grazing practices and assess rangeland conditions and allotment plans prior to developing management criteria. Some comments stated that livestock grazing activity should not be allowed within the IFNM at all, while others suggested maintaining existing grazing allotments and animal unit months. Some

comments stated that livestock grazing activities should be phased out slowly from the IFNM. The concern for wildlife competing with livestock is important to some people, whereas others urge BLM to develop a quality grazing management plan for multi-use activity within the IFNM.

Lands and Realty - The comments received on land ownership adjustments focus on the inholdings of private and State Trust Land within the IFNM boundaries. Some commenters suggest that BLM should work with the Arizona State Land Department to adjust land ownership patterns to protect natural resources. Several comments also noted that BLM should pursue acquisition of private lands for similar reasons. Other comments indicated that BLM should not change ownership patterns within the IFNM or that BLM should recognize private property rights.

Law Enforcement and Undocumented Immigrants - Law enforcement issues identified by the public focused on OHV traffic, recreational shooting, resource damage, trash (including both littering and dumping), and undocumented immigrants. Most of the comments noting public safety as an issue were submitted from various individuals in one of the form letters. Additional letters, which varied from the form letter, included similar language indicating that vehicle routes that endanger public safety should be closed and restored. In addition, many comments stated that additional law enforcement is needed in the IFNM, with respect to existing permitted activities. Other comments noted that recreational shooting poses a hazard to public safety. Only a few comments received suggested that undocumented immigrants harm the land and resources.

Mineral and Energy Resources - There were many comments relating to mining activities in the IFNM. Those opposed to mining were concerned with the potential impacts on wildlife, water quality, and erosion caused by mining. Most of the comments relating to mineral and energy resources were general comments opposed to mining access and activities in the

area without stating specific reasons for the opposition. A large number of comments indicate opposition to mining activities due to the potential impact on wildlife and vegetation in the area. A small number of comments indicate opposition to mining because of the impacts on water quality and erosion from mining operations. Several comments supported mining access and operations in the IFNM or the surrounding area.

In addition to those comments discussed above, a large number of comments received related to the issue of historical environmental damage by mining companies. These comments suggested that those responsible should restore areas that have been disturbed by past mining operations. Some of these comments referred specifically to the Asarco Silver Bell mining operations.



Recreation – Comments related to recreation focused mainly on activities such as hiking, horseback riding, biking, camping, hunting, and recreational shooting. Several of the comments suggested that recreational activities be limited to protect the resources in the IFNM from degradation. Other comments stated that opportunities should be available for a variety of activities, including motorized uses. A large portion of the comments supported the continuation of currently allowed recreational uses.

Transportation and Access -

Issues related to access focused on points of access into the IFNM as well as access to and from adjacent lands and communities. Some comments related to access for a specific purpose or use. Multi-jurisdictional concerns were noted in relation to State and private

lands located within the planning area as well as adjacent State, private, and Tohono O’odham Nation lands. A strong sentiment that the public lands should be accessible to Americans was often noted among those commenters that supported continued access in some form or another. Some comments noted general access concerns particular to the designation of special management areas (such as wilderness).

Visual Resources - There were many comments that attested to the beauty of the land and the need to protect the natural landscape; several comments referenced scenic views/open space. A large portion of the comments on visual resources stated that the threats to scenic values are development (urban sprawl and visitor facilities) and impacts of recreational use (in particular, OHV use). One commenter noted that lighting within the monument should be minimized, to pursue opportunities for night-sky observations.

Planning Criteria Identified Through Scoping

In addition to various existing legal mandates, the general planning criteria listed below will guide this planning process and the creation of management alternatives for the RMP and EIS. The planning criteria identified by the BLM and refined based on comments received during scoping include but are not limited to the following:

- The IFNM RMP will establish the guidance BLM will use to manage the IFNM, and will supercede all other BLM RMPs for the lands covered by the IFNM RMP.
- The RMP will be completed in compliance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, Endangered Species Act, National Environmental Policy Act, and all other relevant federal law and executive orders (including wilderness legislation) and management policies of the BLM. The RMP also will meet the requirements of the Presidential Proclamation to protect the objects of biological, archaeological, historical, and geological value within the IFNM.
- Where planning decisions previously have been made that still apply, they will be re-evaluated to determine if they are compatible with the Presidential Proclamation and then those decisions will be carried forward into the RMP. BLM also will use information developed and management alternatives proposed in previous studies of the planning area.
- The planning team will work collaboratively with the State of Arizona; Pinal and Pima counties; tribal governments; municipal governments; other federal agencies; the Resource Advisory Council; and all other interested groups, agencies, and individuals. Decisions in the RMP will strive to be compatible with existing plans and policies of adjacent local, State, tribal, and Federal agencies, consistent with federal law and regulations.
- Native American tribal consultations will be conducted in accordance with policy, and tribal concerns will be given due consideration. The planning process will include the consideration of any impacts on Indian trust assets.
- Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will take place throughout the planning process in accordance with the recent National Memorandum of Agreement to identify conservation actions and measures for inclusion in the plan. The BLM Tucson Field Office has initiated the consultation process with the USFWS under a specific Consultation Agreement, which identified the roles and responsibilities of the Tucson Field Office and the USFWS during the consultation process.
- Coordination with Arizona State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) will be conducted throughout the planning process.
- The RMP will recognize the State of Arizona’s authority to manage wildlife, including hunting and fishing, within the planning area.
- The RMP will establish whether visitor facilities will be located within the monument, while recognizing the desire to maintain the existing natural and cultural landscapes.
- The RMP will set forth a framework for managing recreational and commercial activities in order to maintain existing natural landscapes and provide for the enjoyment and safety of the visiting public.
- The lifestyles of area residents, including activities of grazing, hunting, and backcountry motorized use and recreation, will be considered in the RMP.
- Any lands or interests located within the IFNM boundary, which are acquired by BLM, will be managed consistently with the RMP, subject to any constraints associated with the acquisition.



- The RMP will address transportation and access for all public lands. Within the IFNM, motorized and mechanized routes will be designated.
- The RMP will recognize all existing rights.
- Federal Geographic Data Committee standards and other applicable BLM standards will be followed.

Vision for the Ironwood Forest National Monument

“The IFNM will remain a place where the ironwood-rich Sonoran Desert ecosystem retains its naturalness, open spaces, outstanding vistas, and unique resources for present and future generations to use, enjoy, and appreciate.”

BLM’s Planning Process and What’s Next

The process for developing the RMP and EIS for the IFNM is well underway. Issues identified through the public scoping process, issuance of this Planning Bulletin (in summary), and introduction to the vision accomplishes one of the nine basic steps to BLM’s planning process.

As part of the next steps in the process, the planning team will integrate and use the issues identified through scoping, inventory resource data, and analyze the existing management direction (including compliance) with Federal, State and local policies and procedures in the development of the draft management alternatives. A range of reasonable alternatives, including an alternative considering no action, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act, will be developed and analyzed in the EIS.

BLM is planning to host workshops, beginning in early March, to update the public on the IFNM planning process, present the results of scoping, and ask for public input on future meeting topics relevant to IFNM planning. In addition, BLM will be seeking public participation in the review and development of the vision for the future of the IFNM. The intent of the vision statement is to articulate what the public and BLM want the IFNM to be like in the future. The draft vision is included above.

In late March, BLM will host workshops to solicit public input on the long-term resource-management goals drafted by the BLM Tucson Field Office. The intent of the goals is to establish broad statements for management of the IFNM that will help BLM, and the public, maintain and/or achieve the vision. The resource management goals for the IFNM will be available for review at the public workshops in late March.

Staying Involved

BLM invites your continued participation in the RMP and EIS process. The upcoming public workshops will provide an opportunity for you to hear more about the IFNM planning process, give input on the topics that future meetings should focus on, comment on the vision for the IFNM, and help develop the long-term management goals to achieve that vision. Two workshops, covering the same topics, will be held on each date – one in the afternoon and one in the evening – to offer alternative times to encourage attendance.

Introduction to the Planning Process

Monday, March 8, 2004

2:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

OR

6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

A brief presentation will be provided at the beginning of each workshop.

Long-term Management Goals

Monday, March 29, 2004

2:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

OR

6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

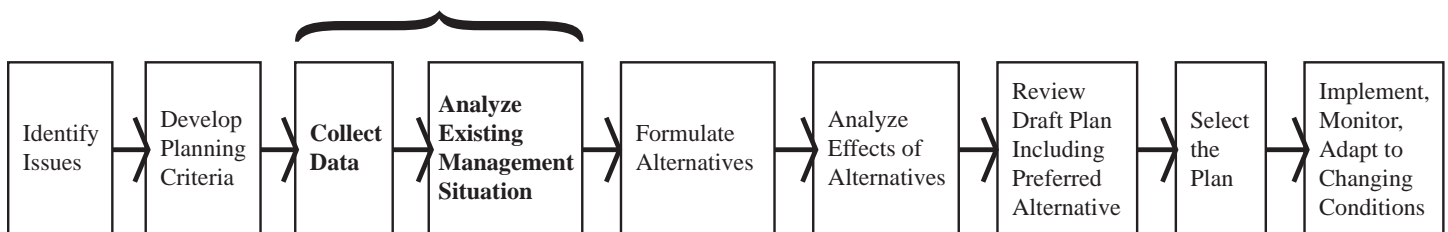
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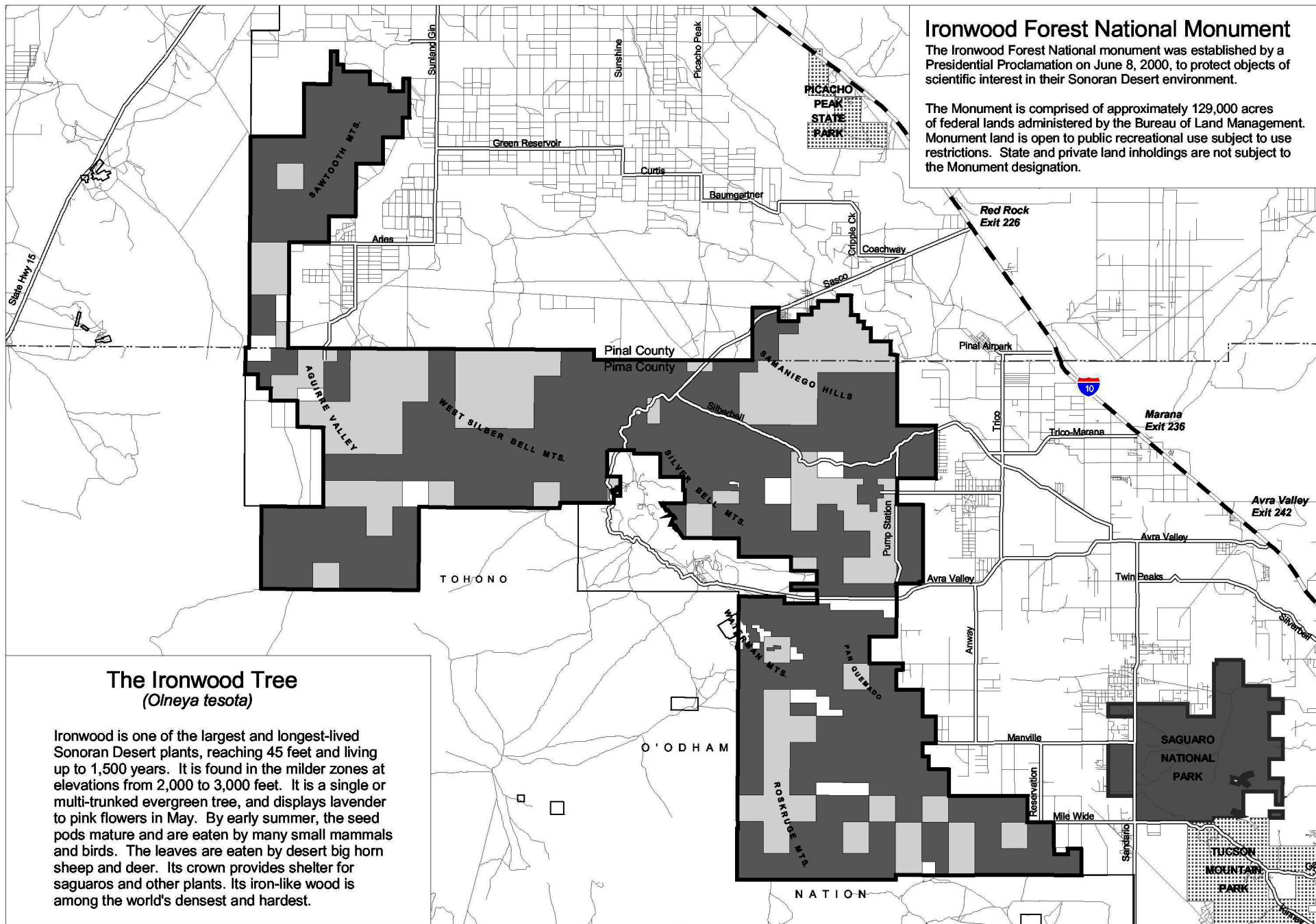
These workshops will be held at the Pima County Parks and Recreation Center located at:

3500 West River Road
Tucson, Arizona

Based on input received during the workshops on March 8, future workshops will be scheduled for the next several months that are anticipated to include resource-specific working group meetings, field trips, and development of alternative management strategies. BLM will announce dates for these meetings and workshops, as they are determined.

WE ARE HERE.





0 3 6 9 Miles

United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
TUCSON FIELD OFFICE



General Land Ownership in the Monument:

- Bureau of Land Management
- State Land Inholdings
- Private Land Inholdings

- Monument Boundary
- Monument Access Route

IRONWOOD FOREST NATIONAL MONUMENT

Bureau of Land Management
Tucson Field Office
12661 East Broadway Blvd.
Tucson, AZ 85748-7208

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**Ironwood Forest National Monument
Resource Management Plan and
Environmental Impact Statement
(RMP and EIS)**

Planning Overview

The BLM, Tucson Field Office, is preparing a Resource Management Plan (RMP) and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to analyze BLM's management of public land in the Ironwood Forest National Monument (IFNM) in Arizona. The IFNM, which was established on June 9, 2000 with the signing of Presidential Proclamation 7320, encompasses approximately 189,600 acres, including approximately 128,900 acres of public land administered by the BLM. An EIS is being prepared to identify the potential effects of implementing the alternative management approaches within the IFNM and to identify appropriate measures to mitigate potential impacts. Together, the RMP and EIS will analyze and establish BLM's management practices for these lands in response to the Presidential Proclamation, current legislation and policies, and the demand to use public land and its resources.

Meeting Times and Dates

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NOTICE!